

ESL Symposium Speech
Towada City, Japan
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“Konichiwah” Chairperson, honoured guests, members of the Towada-Association for International Relations (T-AIR), students and all in attendance. Thank you for attending this exciting symposium.

My name is Harold Pereverseff, I am the President of the Lethbridge Twinning Society in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada. Mr. Shirayama is my Japanese counterpart, here in Towada City. This is my fourth visit to Towada City since the year 2002.

I wish to acknowledge T-AIR for organizing and making this ESL – JSL symposium a reality. I wish to express a huge thank you to T-AIR President, Mr. Haruwo Shirayama for the special invitation extended to myself to participate in this momentous symposium. We acknowledge Mr. Teiichi Arao, the Director for T-AIR – Lethbridge relations, “Ari-gatoh Go-za-i-masu”!

Let me start off by saying that my home city, Lethbridge, is a community of approximately 90,000 people. We are located in the southern region of Alberta two hours south of the City of Calgary and only one hour north of the United States of America border.

In Lethbridge, we enjoy four seasons very much like the seasons here in Towada City.

Our city is in the heart of an agricultural district where wonderful corn, potato, sugar beets and grains of wheat, oats, barley and canola grow abundantly. We live in an arid region so the farmers depend on irrigation to provide needed moisture for their crops. Very large cattle and hog farms also exist in our regions, and in fact, only a few miles away from our city there is an international horse processing plant that specializes in exporting horse meat for human consumption all over the world, and I am certain that some of the horse meat is shipped to Japan.

Lethbridge is also a centre for learning. The education system we enjoy offers a number of choices to the residents. There are public schools, Catholic schools as well as private or charter schools. Secondary education is offered at our University (2014 student population of over 8,500), our College (2014 student population of over 4,000) as well as other vocational institutions.

Lethbridge is the ideal location to learn English as a second language. Following my presentation you will hear from representatives from our University, our College and from Flexibility Learning Systems.

The Lethbridge Twinning Society (LTS) and the Towada Association for International Relations (T-AIR) have enjoyed an official twinning relationship since 2002.

Since that time, we have enjoyed delegation visits between our two great communities.

A number of students have come from Towada City as members of the delegaton visits to Lethbridge. Some students have come and studied English as a Second Language. We were so happy to welcome, Asuto in 2010 Risa in 2012 and Katsuhito and Toshihiko in 2014. Asuto and Risa studied at our Flexibility Learning Systems while Toshihiko and Katsuhito studied at the Lethbridge College.

In 2013, Dr. David Ibsen, who is an Associate of the Lethbridge Twinning Society, visited Towada City and facilitated a “reunion” of alumni students from Towada City who had studied ESL in Alberta and some students from Alberta who had been studying in Japan. The efforts of Dr. Ibsen along with dedicated individuals of LTS and T-AIR with the support of local and national government is the reason that we are here today. We are collectively here to promote the English as a Second Language (ESL) training that is that is formally available in Lethbridge. You will be hearing from instructors and administrators from the three institutions that offer ESL in Lethbridge.

The Lethbridge Twinning Society not only has “Sister City” relations with Towada City, Japan but also with Timashevsk, Russia and Culver City, California (USA). For over two decades, we have had students come from Russia to learn English and our Canadian culture. Most recently have students from Japan been coming to Lethbridge for the Canadian cultural experience and to learn English. Members of the Lethbridge Twinning Society have welcomed all our students and we provide the opportunity of homestay accommodations. This not only gives the students a safe and secure environment, but as well assists us in establishing and maintaining our twinning relationships with our sister cities. In our Society, we have members who can communicate in Japanese, we even have a former resident from Towada City.

In 2003, Takako Yamada was a student when she first came to Lethbridge as part of a delegation visit led by Dr. Seiichi Kawamura. In 2005, Takako married our oldest son and they now live in Lethbridge. So you never know what can happen when you visit a foreign land! Maybe you want to try?

So why should you consider studying English as a second language? There are many advantages to learning English.

First and foremost, English is a “Global Language”. English is spoken all over the world and as such if you can communicate in English, doors are and windows are open to you. In the international world we live in today, if your resume includes that you speak and write in English your chances of a higher paying and more rewarding career are expanded.

- In today’s business world, English has become the default second language.
- The English language is number one as far as having the greatest number of speakers or followers in the world today.
- English is the primary language used on the World Wide Web.
- English broadens your opportunities for travel to foreign lands.
- English allows you to communicate effectively in most foreign lands
- You are able to read road signs, dinner menus, read newspapers all of which enriches you personally, but as well makes you a welcome and respected guest or visitor in a foreign land.

Communication is the key to success and understanding one another. However going beyond that, accepting one another..... – ACCEPTING ONE ANOTHER – ! In this wonderful world we live in, what we must do is learn how to communicate with one another better, and when we do, we will find world tension and stress will be alleviated. This is the major goal and emphasis of the Lethbridge Twinning Society. We join with more than 2,000 “Sister City” relationships that have been established in five continents through Sister Cities International in Washington, D.C. USA. The Lethbridge Twinning Society is a proud member of the Sister Cities International organization.

Ladies and gentlemen, the ESL programs that you will be hearing about today is your opportunity, not only to you students but to adult ESL training as well. This is a golden opportunity that we encourage you to engage.

I encourage you to choose to learn English as a second language in Lethbridge at one of our fine learning centers. You will enjoy English in your classes, but in also after your classes in our beautiful community. This is called “immersion”. Everywhere you go in our city, English is spoken. We give you the option of “home stay” where you will be not only be learning English all day long in this environment, but enjoying the Canadian culture as well.

Members of the Lethbridge Twinning Society are always excited when we hear that ESL students from Towada City are coming. We look forward to their visits and we accept the students as part of our families. This makes for a safe and intimate experience for the students. Our experience with the ESL students have always been positive. The host families have told us that they learn from the students as well as the students learn from the ESL programs. Relationships have been established and close friendships

have resulted, it is always so hard to say goodbye to each other at the end of the programs. The ESL programs supported by the LTS and T-AIR have much more personal and committed aspects than any commercial or tourist based programs that we are aware of.

Not only am I here to encourage you to participate in our suggest ESL programs, I am here learning about Japanese as a Second Language training, (JSL). I want to go back to Lethbridge and to let our residents know what JSL is or will be available in Towada City! This symposium is a joint effort that will grow our international friendships and has the potential of making the Lethbridge Twinning Society and the Towada City Association for International Relations the best "Sister City" relationship ever.

Thank you and enjoy this awesome symposium.